

THE ESSENCE OF LEADERSHIP

Handout 1

The Essence of Leadership

Views of a Former Commander

LT GEN EVAN W. ROSENCRANS, USAF, Retired

*Following is an excerpt from an official US Air Force oral history interview with General Rosencrans that was conducted in July 1984, by Dr. James C. Hasdorff, of the USAF Historical Research Center, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.**

General Rosencran's views on leadership and command should be carefully considered by officers aspiring to positions of high authority, as his common sense approach points up the need for serious thought about and commitment to this important aspect of an effective combat force. General Rosencrans concluded his interview with:

FINALLY, let me address the qualities that I think are necessary in order to be a good leader and a good commander. The first and most important is courage. If you don't have courage, you are never going to be a good commander whatever your other qualifications are. The courage must extend down as well as up. Courage should not be mislabeled loyalty. Although loyalty is a requirement, courage is even more of a requirement.

Second, you must be totally honest. Your integrity must be beyond question at any time of the day or night.

Third, you have to have the ability to see beyond tomorrow. I have met so many colonels who stayed and retired as colonels because they couldn't see anything but what they were looking for tomorrow.

Fourth, we hear a lot about motivation. It's a buzzword. It's kind of like readiness. No one has ever really defined readiness; no one has ever really defined motivation except to say it's the ability to get others to do as you wish them to do. What people forget is, you must change the attitude before you motivate. It's attitude that's the key; then motivation will follow.

Next, you must realize that no inanimate object ever had a problem; people have problems. Airplanes that are broken don't have problems; people have problems with broken airplanes. Mess halls that don't serve good meals don't have problems; people who work in those mess halls have problems serving good meals. You get everything done through people. This relates directly back to what I said about attitude: get the attitude right, and the problems will take care of themselves because the people are motivated.

Next, never lose control of yourself; never raise your voice; never let the situation control you. Even though it appears to be out of hand, you must always be doing something to change the situation if you don't like it. You must never resign yourself to "that is the situation" or "that is the system and that's how it works." That attitude of resignation will defeat you and defeat your people. You must always be attempting to influence the situation.

Next, you must have a working knowledge of what your people are doing. You are not expected to be an expert welder or an expert aircraft mechanic or an expert supply monitor or an expert cook or anything else, but you have got to know something about all those jobs so that you can discuss them intelligently. You have to discuss them on a personal basis: "What are you doing? Tell me what you are doing and how you are doing it." Let that individual speak to you. When he is speaking to you, that's when you want to have the photographer present, and that photographer takes the picture while that airman or junior officer is speaking to you so that he can send copies of those pictures to his girlfriend and his family and pin it up in the barracks and say, "I told the general." You have got to let him know you are interested in what he is doing. You have got to let him know you know a little bit about it but you want to know more because you are interested in it and it is contributing to the mission. And if possible, learn something about him. If you have worked with a group of people for six months and you don't know something personal about each individual, you are no leader, and you are no commander. It has to be a sincere interest.

Finally, and the most obvious, you must live what you say. If you preach honesty and morality and good conduct and whatever else you preach, such as getting the job done to the best of your ability, and getting it done right the first time, that's the way you must live, because if you don't you won't get what you want from your subordinates. You have to be the shining example, and you must never fail. It is easy to be a leader and a commander from eight o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the afternoon. From five in the afternoon until eight in the morning is when it is tough to be a commander. That's when you have to get out of bed and go get somebody out of jail. That's when the crises come up and you have to function like you have just had 24 hours of sleep and you are perfectly rested and perfectly in control of the situation. You have got to be a commander 24 hours a day. You can't be horsing around the officers club; you can't be making a spectacle of yourself out on the street. You have got to get along not only with your people but with your civilian counterparts with whom you associate.

I say this because I have tried to use these guidelines for being a commander. When I was 24 years old, before I went to Korea, I sat down and I decided at that time there were four things I would have to do so that the day I died I would consider myself successful. These are professional things, not the personal things such as being a good father and raising a family and things like that. In order to be successful, I would have to find out whether or not I was afraid to die. Would I turn and run when somebody shot at me? Would I conduct myself in combat in such a manner that it was obvious that I was afraid to die? I think with the record of 265 combat missions (most of which were ground support, armed reconnaissance, and missions of that nature) I have proven to myself that I will not turn and run when somebody shoots at me and that I am not afraid to die.

Second, I wanted to fly at least 37 combat missions. Where I got the number 37, I will never know, but I felt if I flew that many I would be successful. Obviously, I made that goal.

The third thing was that if I stayed in the Air Force, and I wasn't sure at the age of 24 I was going to make it a career. I wanted to be at least a lieutenant general. Thanks to the work of many people, I became a lieutenant general.

Finally, I wanted to become a millionaire before I died. Obviously, my first three objectives were counterproductive to my fourth, and I haven't reached it yet, but I am still working on it!

* USAF Oral History Interview No. K239.0594 with Lt Gen Evan W. Rosencrans, USAF, Retired, 26-27 July 1984, San Antonio, Texas, 146-48.

Contributor

Lt Gen Evan W. Rosencrans, USAF, Retired (USMA; MBA, George Washington University), is director, Broadway Air Force National Bank, San Antonio, Texas. A command pilot with approximately 5,000 flying hours, he has been an operations staff officer with Headquarters Pacific Air Forces at Hickam AFB, Hawaii, and in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Operations; a flight commander, flying safety officer, and assistant operations officer at Westover AFB, Massachusetts; a commander of the 531st Tactical Fighter Squadron at Misawa AB, Japan, and of the 354th Tactical Fighter Wing at Myrtle Beach AFB, South Carolina; and had assignments at Ramstein AB, West Germany, and Seoul, South Korea. Before his retirement in 1981, General Rosencrans was a member of the General Purpose Forces Branch of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Special Study Group. During the Korean War, he served with the 80th Fighter-Bomber Squadron in South Korea and Japan. General Rosencrans is a graduate of Air Command and Staff College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

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MAJOR GENERAL IRA C. EAKER**Handout 2****Major General Ira C. Eaker**

Retired 31 August 1947; promoted to lieutenant general on the retired list 29 June 1948; advanced to general April 1985; died 6 August 1987.

Ira C. Eaker was born in Field Creek, TX, in 1896. He was appointed a second lieutenant in the Infantry Section, Officer's, Reserve Corps, and assigned to active duty with the 64th Infantry at El Paso, TX. On 15 November 1917, he was commissioned a second lieutenant of Infantry in the Regular Army.

General Eaker remained with the 64th Infantry at El Paso until March 1918, when he was placed on detached service to receive flying instruction at Austin and Kelly fields in Texas. Upon graduation the following October, he was rated a pilot and assigned to Rockwell Field, CA.

In July 1919, he transferred to the Philippine Islands, where he served with the Second Aero Squadron at Fort Mills until September 1919; with the Third Aero Squadron at Camp Stotsenburg until September 1920; and as executive officer of the Department Air Office, Department and Assistant Department Air Officer, Philippine Department; and in command of the Philippine Air Depot at Manila until September 1921.

Meanwhile, on 1 July 1920, he transferred from the Infantry to the Air Service and returned to the United States in January 1922, for duty at Mitchell Field, NY, where he commanded the Fifth Aero Squadron and later was post adjutant.

In June 1924, the general was named executive assistant in the Office of Air Service at Washington, DC, and from December 1926, to May 1927, he served as a pilot of one of the planes of the Pan American Flight, which made a goodwill trip around South America. He then became executive officer in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War at Washington, DC.

In September 1926, he was named operations and line maintenance officer at Bolling Field, Washington, DC. While on that duty, he participated as chief pilot on the refueling endurance flight of the Army plane, "Question Mark," from 1 to 7 January 1929, establishing a new world flight endurance record. In 1930, he made the first transcontinental flight with in-flight refueling.

In October 1934, General Eaker was ordered to duty at March Field, CA, where he commanded the 34th Pursuit Squadron and later the 17th Pursuit Squadron. In the summer of 1935, he was detached for duty with the Navy and participated aboard the aircraft carrier, "Lexington," on maneuvers in Hawaii and Guam.

General Eaker entered the Air Corps Tactical School at Maxwell Field, AL, in August 1935, and upon graduation the following June entered the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, KS, from which he graduated in June 1937. He then became assistant chief of the Information Division in the Office of the Chief of Air Corps at Washington, DC, and in November 1940, assumed command of the 20th Pursuit Group at Hamilton Field, CA.

In January 1942, he was assigned to organize the VIII Bomber Command and to understudy the British system of bomber operations; then in December 1942, he assumed command of the Eighth Air Force in England. Later, he became commanding general of all US Army Air Forces in the United Kingdom. In January 1944, he was named air commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces, having under his command the 12th and 15th US Air Forces and the British Desert and Balkan Air Forces.

On 30 April 1945, General Eaker was named deputy commander of the Army Air Forces and chief of the Air Staff. He retired 31 August 1947, and was promoted to lieutenant general on the retired list 29 June 1948.

General Eaker is a pilot with 12,000 flying hours in 30 years of flying. His military decorations include the Air Force Distinguished Service Medal; Army Distinguished Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters; Navy Distinguished Service Medal; Silver Star; Legion of Merit; Distinguished Flying Cross with oak leaf cluster; Air Medal; World War I and II Victory Medals; American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal; and the European-African-Middle East Campaign Medal with bronze service stars.

General Eaker's foreign decorations include the Bolivian Order of Condor of the Andes; the Chilean Order Al Merito, Officer; Peruvian Order of the Sun of Peru, Officer; Venezuelan Order of the Liberator, Officer; Knight of the British Empire; Brazilian Order of the Southern Cross, Grand Official Order; Russian Order of Kutusov, Second Degree; Yugoslavian Partisan Star, First Class; French Legion of Honor, Grand Officer; French Croix de Guerre with Palm; Italian Grand Master of the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus; British Knight Commander of the Bath; Brazilian Order of Aeronautical Merit; Polish Military Order of the Gold Cross of Merit with Swords.

General Eaker is co-author of "This Flying Game," "Army Flyer," and "Winged Warfare." Since 1962 he has authored a weekly column, carried by more than 35 newspapers, on subjects in the national security area.

On 10 October 1978, the president of the United States, authorized by act of Congress, awarded in the name of the congress, a special Congressional Gold Medal to General Eaker, for contributing immeasurably to the development of aviation and to the security of his country.

(Current as of 25 April 1985)